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MEMORANDUM

Andropov's Legacy and the Future

President Yuriy Andropov's death at age 69, only 15 months after he became party General Secretary and only six months after he became head of state, finds the regime largely unprepared for a new succession. Although Andropov had accumulated more personal power than any of his predecessors in a comparable period, his tenure was so brief, and his absences from the job so lengthy, that his regime will be known more for what it set in motion than for what it accomplished. The succession choice is not as clear-cut as it was after Brezhnev. Whoever is chosen, Andropov has left him the same unresolved economic, social, military, and foreign problems that confronted him.

The remaining leaders in the Politburo will move quickly to select a new General Secretary--their choice will be ratified by a plenary meeting of the party Central Committee within a few days. This will be a tough decision to make. All the viable candidates for the top party post have significant liabilities. The issue seems to be whether to opt now for a younger, perhaps more vigorous and longer lasting leadership or to choose a senior leader who will function as a transitional figure, thus once again avoiding a more profound change at the top.

A Tenure Too Short

Continuity was the main theme of both domestic and foreign policies during Andropov's brief tenure. Andropov's own cautious approach in pressing for major changes, the entrenched political opposition, bureaucratic resistance to important policy shifts, and his flagging health made it impossible for him to have a significant impact on Soviet politics or policy.

On domestic issues Andropov focused his attention on the need to rejuvenate the elite and revitalize the Soviet economy, attempting to "get the country moving again," after the lethargy of Brezhnev's last year. Andropov chose administrative measures (the discipline and anticorruption campaigns) to set the tone for his regime and to attain at least a short-

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